



STATEMENT BY

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INTERNATIONAL SEABED AUTHORITY**

**Agenda item 76 (a)
OCEANS AND THE LAW OF THE SEA**

**64th SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

7 DECEMBER 2009

New York

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Mr. President,

Allow me first of all to congratulate you on your election to the Presidency of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly. I have every confidence in your ability to guide the Assembly to a successful conclusion.

Mr. President, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my honour today to address you for the first time as the Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority. As you know, the Authority is one of the principal international institutions established by the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and has been entrusted by the international community with the responsibility to organize and control activities in the seabed and subsoil beyond national jurisdiction for the benefit of mankind as a whole. I feel extremely privileged to have been invested with the responsibility for guiding the work of the Authority over the next four years and wish to express my gratitude to member States for the trust they have placed in me.

Mr. President,

I wish to refer to the two resolutions before the General Assembly and express my appreciation to member States for their positive references to the work of the International Seabed Authority. I also express appreciation for the very comprehensive reports of the Secretary-General which, as usual, provide a rich source of detailed background material for our consideration.

I would like to take this opportunity to comment on operative paragraph 33 of draft resolution A/63/L.18, which takes note of the progress made by the Authority in its deliberations and urges the finalization of regulations for prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides as soon as possible. I wish to inform the Assembly that, at its 2009 session, the Council of the Authority made excellent progress in tackling the outstanding issues with respect to the draft regulations. All delegations approached the discussions on the remaining issues with a positive spirit and with the intention of making substantive progress. Although it was not possible to complete the work, only two issues remained outstanding at the end of the session. It was also clear that the lack of agreement on these issues was not the result of any lack of commitment, but rather the result of the complex legal and technical nature of the outstanding issues, which required more time and reflection for many members of the Council.

I am confident that it will be possible to complete the work on the draft regulations at the next session in 2010 and I believe that all members of the Council are also committed to bringing this work to a conclusion. I continue to believe that this is an important goal for the Authority. It is quite likely that one or more States will wish to pursue exploration licences in the near future and it is essential in these circumstances that the regulatory framework is not delayed unnecessarily. Indeed, if seabed mining is to become a commercial reality, it is important that the Authority begins progressively to examine the issues relating to the nature of the regulatory framework that would apply

beyond the exploration phase that were left pending as a result of the 1994 Implementation Agreement, and to begin to address some of the critical legal and financial questions that will eventually determine whether investment in the seabed mining industry will take place or not.

Mr. President,

I am pleased to note that draft resolution A/64/L.18 places particular emphasis on two matters that are of great importance to the Authority. These are: the issue of capacity building in matters relating to ocean affairs and the law of the sea; and the question of measures for the protection and preservation of the marine environment, including marine biological diversity, in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

The Authority is engaged in a number of efforts designed to help to strengthen the capacity of member States, particularly developing States, to fully realize the objectives of the regime for the international seabed area. These efforts include a series of regional sensitization seminars aimed at promoting the work of the Authority and encouraging cooperation amongst countries in those regions to make full use of the resources of the deep seabed. The third of these regional seminars was held in Abuja, Nigeria, in the first part of 2009. Like the previous event, held in Rio de Janeiro in 2008, the Abuja seminar was a great success, bringing together international scientific and technical experts, as well as a broad cross-section of technical personnel from Nigeria and neighbouring West African States. I would like to convey my appreciation to the Government of Nigeria for its initiative in deciding to host the seminar and for its excellent hospitality. A further regional seminar is proposed for February 2010, to be hosted by the Government of Spain, and I would welcome discussions with any other member States that may be interested in working with the Authority to ensure that the scientific, technical and legal skills necessary for the full realization of the objectives of the Convention are made available to developing countries.

Mr. President,

My predecessor informed this Assembly of the establishment by the Authority of its Endowment Fund for the promotion of marine scientific research. I am pleased to report that, after putting in place the necessary administrative and practical arrangements, the Endowment Fund commenced its activities in earnest during 2009.

In 2009 alone, the Fund has provided training and research opportunities for more than 15 individuals from developing countries. The activities included: support for three scientific fellowships at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute in the United States; support for three research fellowships at the National Oceanographic Institute of India; support for eight participants at the 2009 Rhodes Academy; and support for practical scientific training in deep sea exploration techniques through the Chinese Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association. Last month, as a follow up to the signature of a memorandum of understanding with the Authority, China

announced that it will fund postgraduate studies in marine science at Tongji University, Shanghai, for up to five candidates from developing member States.

One of the remarkable aspects of the Fund has been the strong interest expressed by leading scientific and technical institutions around the world in collaborating with the Authority to provide training opportunities of this nature. This clearly indicates to me that there is a great willingness on the part of the scientific community worldwide to share its knowledge and experience for the benefit of the developing world. However, whilst the Authority can act as a catalyst in this regard, it is essential that the Fund grows over time so that it can adequately meet the very clear demand for enhanced capacity building in the area of marine scientific research. I would like to acknowledge with gratitude the Governments of Mexico and the United Kingdom, which made contributions to the Fund in 2008, and the Governments of Norway and Germany, which made substantial contributions to the Fund in 2009. I also wish to once again encourage member States and others to contribute to the Fund, or to discuss possible co-funding arrangements with the Authority, in order that qualified scientists from developing countries may continue to benefit from the broad range of potential opportunities available to them.

Mr. President,

I turn to the question of the protection and preservation of the marine environment. As all member States are aware, this is a subject that has always been a priority concern for the Authority. Concern for the marine environment is fully reflected in the exploration code, which requires contractors to collect environmental data and share it with the Authority, to carry out environmental studies of the conditions at the ocean floor and progressively to conduct assessments of the impacts of their activities on the marine environment.

One of the major difficulties for the Authority, and for any other institution dealing with the problems of managing biodiversity in the deep ocean, is the lack of adequate data on which to base decisions. In this regard, the major contribution of the Authority has been its work over the past 12 years in collecting and standardizing available data relating to the deep sea environment. This work has been carried out in collaboration not only with contractors, but also with leading scientists and relevant international research programmes, including the Census of Marine Life. As a global institution, the Authority is well placed to act as a repository for these data, and, in accordance with its mandate under the Convention, to promote and encourage research programmes using these data and to disseminate the results for the benefit of all States.

The benefits to be had from the Authority's methodical and systematic approach to this task are becoming clear. This month, we will conclude work on a geological model of the Clarion Clipperton Fracture Zone in the Central Pacific Ocean – a vast area that extends over 4,000 kilometres from east to west and 1,500 kilometers from north to south. This project, which has taken four years to complete, is the most comprehensive and detailed scientific study of the geology and environment of the

seafloor to have been carried out. It will significantly enhance our understanding of the way in which mineral deposits form on the seafloor and how geochemical and geophysical conditions affect the marine environment at great depth.

Another major development in the work of the Authority was a proposal to set aside certain areas of the Central Pacific Ocean for the purposes of protecting the environment and safeguarding biodiversity. This proposal, which was based on extensive scientific and geospatial analysis of the environmental characteristics of the areas concerned over a period of several years, was taken up by the Legal and Technical Commission in 2008 and 2009. The Commission has decided that what is needed is a comprehensive environmental management plan at regional scale. Accordingly, one of the priority activities of the Authority in 2010 will be to convene an international workshop, to include representatives of contractors with the Authority as well as other scientists and experts, to further review the proposal and to advise on the formulation of an environmental management plan, including a strategic environmental assessment, at regional scale for the entire Clarion Clipperton Zone. The Authority is thus in a very real and practical way beginning to implement the global commitments that have been made by member States for the protection and preservation of marine biodiversity.

Finally, Mr. President, I wish to remind all members of the Authority that it is their duty to attend and participate in the work of the Authority. In the past, considerable concern has been expressed in the Assembly regarding the timing of the meetings of the Authority. In response to those concerns, which are also reflected in operative paragraph 36 of draft resolution A/64/L.18, and with the cooperation of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, we have in the past two years brought forward the annual meeting of the Authority in the expectation that there will be better attendance, and that this will overcome the recurring problem of the lack of a quorum for the meetings of the Assembly of the Authority. For 2010, we have proposed even earlier dates than usual, and I am pleased to announce that the sixteenth session of the Authority will be held in Kingston from 26 April to 7 May 2010. It will be preceded by a one-week meeting of the Legal and Technical Commission. I urge all member States to do their part in ensuring that they are represented at the meetings of the Authority in Kingston, especially as we have a number of important decisions to take at the next session.
